



I N K & T A L O N

Because You Deserve Better Than a Paywall

July 15, 2025

My Experience With Reedsy: A Warning for the Curious



Image from the film Rzhevsky versus Napoleon (2012), directed by Maryus Vaysberg, starring Volodymyr Zelenskyy

At the end of May, as I was putting together publishing Lies Agreed Upon, it occurred to me I should put it through an ARC (Advance Reader Copy) campaign. I had a number of options before me, of varying audiences and aims.

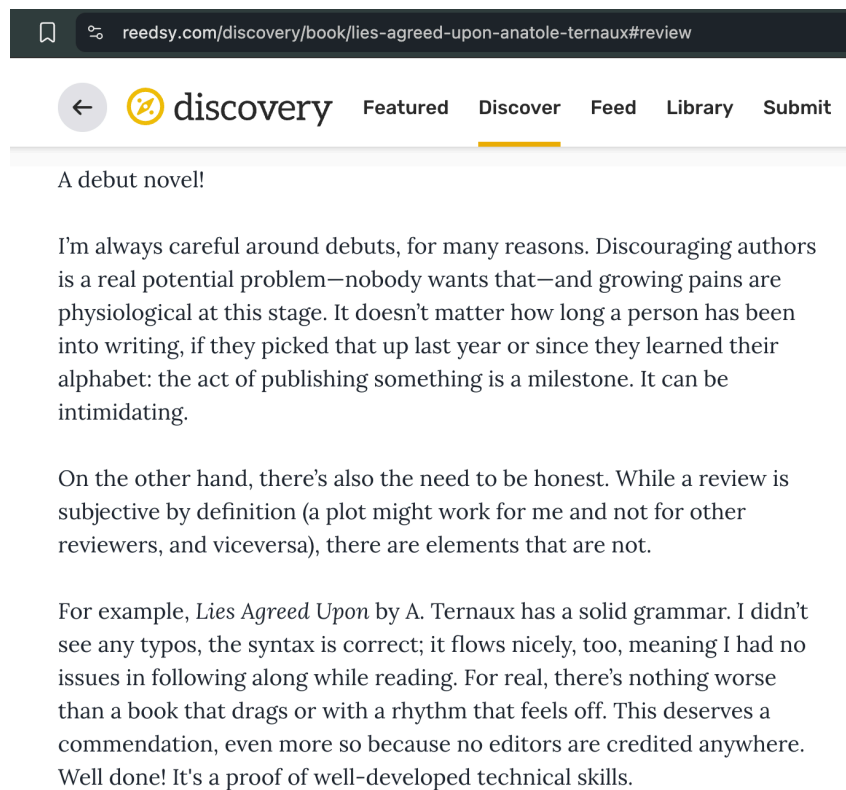
Booksirens rejected me sight unseen. I guess dead, loser French admirals weren't in their YA/romantasy wheelhouse. The History Quill wanted my ARC from just the blurb and the cover, but the ARC fee was a bit more I could handle at the time.

Poking around [r/selfpublish](#) on Reddit, Booksprout and Reedsy were floated as suggestions. I decided on [Reedsy](#) and their ARC branch, [Reedsy Discovery](#), since it looked like I would find more historical fiction readers there. Reedsy vets their editors, reviewers, marketers, and so on. Seemed like a safe bet.



I paid my fee, submitted my ARC, and waited for the day it would go live on Reedsy.

This review, by [Tissie Lilaclorice](#), is what I got back.



The preface is interesting: it says, and I quote, ‘this book will not guide you or hold your hand and explain everything into expository dumps’, which is a statement I can get behind. Exposition, when done well, adds to the story, but not when it’s an infodump chock-full of irrelevant details. However, I feel there’s a fine line between not wanting to spoonfeed your readers and skipping parts altogether.

As I said, I’m backing one hundred percent the choice of not giving your readers all the answers. Make us work for it? Sure! I like this! Just, an ending of some kind is still a need, in my opinion. An epilogue with a (nameless, even, that would be neat) culprit apprehended. A ‘X years later’ conclusion. The letter resurfacing after a while. Someone confessing. You know, anything that ties up what feels like a loose end without going into detail. Like this, it reads to me as if that there’s a bit of action—Villeneuve’s death—followed by a lot of talking.

3 stars on GR

REVIEWED BY



Tissie Lilaclorice

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REVIEWED BY

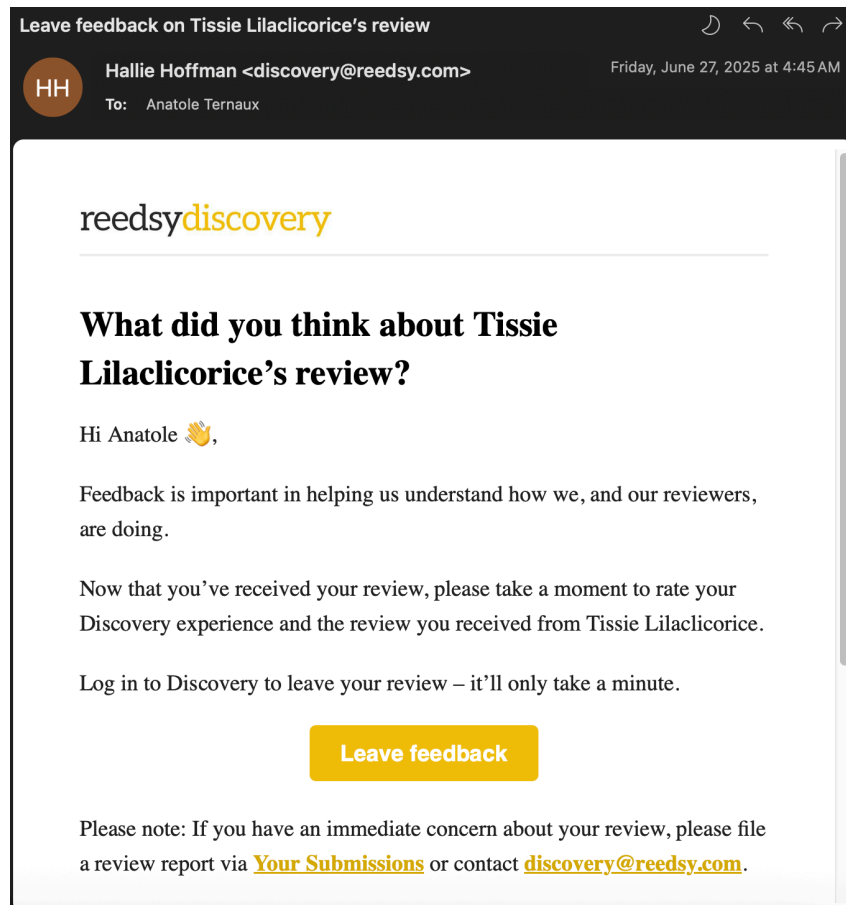


Tissie Lilaclorice

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I'm a reader, a writer, an editor, an alpha and a beta reader. I was born in Italy, but I dream in Icelandic. I've got opinions on books and I'm very bad at keeping them to myself.

The next day, 27 June, I received an invitation to leave feedback in my email.



On 2 July, after initially emailing the wrong address, I sent the following rebuttal to the Your Submissions form and through their email.

I am not complaining about a bad review. A bad review would at least demonstrate some engagement with the material, even if critically. I do, however, object to a careless review.

This review by [Tissie Lilaclicorice](#) falls into the category of careless. She left it on my book "Lies Agreed Upon," which explicitly states was based on true historical events. I have included her review here, plus my editorial critique of her comments.

A debut novel!

I'm always careful around debuts, for many reasons. Discouraging authors is a real potential problem—nobody wants that—and growing pains are physiological at this stage.

This is an assumption without substance. Reviewer states her bias at the beginning like it's supposed to be a good thing. However, a professional reviewer would have gone into this without stating their bias or allowing it to color their response. This is not professional behavior. Stating her bias is discouraging by implying that all debut authors are incompetent until judged by some arbitrary standard she has decided on. This

assumption concludes that I have not published elsewhere under another name.

Also, she is using “physiological” incorrectly.

It doesn't matter how long a person has been into writing, if they picked that up last year or since they learned their alphabet: the act of publishing something is a milestone. It can be intimidating.

See my last point. There is no causality between being a debut novelist and a debut writer. This is an assumption with no substance. Was I supposed to provide my entire backlist and university degree to satisfy some requirement? This was not in Reedsy's terms of service.

On the other hand, there's also the need to be honest. While a review is subjective by definition (a plot might work for me and not for other reviewers, and viceversa), there are elements that are not.

That is a fair statement, but this is where the reviewer's carelessness with the material begins to show. I will proceed to demonstrate how.

For example, Lies Agreed Upon by A. Ternaux has a solid grammar. I didn't see any typos, the syntax is correct; it flows nicely, too, meaning I had no issues in following along while reading. For real, there's nothing worse than a book that drags or with a rhythm that feels off. This deserves a commendation, even more so because no editors are credited anywhere. Well done! It's a proof of well-developed technical skills.

I was unaware that it is a common practice to credit editors, especially when I edited it myself. Yes, I am an author who has the skill, patience, and craft to edit their own work and does not need to outsource it. Is this section meant to be a compliment, or condescension? Please clarify.

The preface is interesting: it says, and I quote, 'this book will not guide you or hold your hand and explain everything into expository dumps', which is a statement I can get behind. Exposition, when done well, adds to the story, but not when it's an infodump chock-full of irrelevant details. However, I feel there's a fine line between not wanting to spoonfeed your readers and skipping parts altogether.

She praises the lack of spoonfeeding information to a reader, and then requests to be spoonfed. The reviewer implies I skipped information and then fails to specify which parts I skipped. Did I fail to incorporate the entire backstory of each character in an expository dump? Was there a timeline issue? If it's the latter, I can point out some Bibliothèque nationale de France and JSTOR articles that back up my narrative choices.

As I said, I'm backing one hundred percent the choice of not giving your readers all the answers. Make us work for it? Sure! I like this! Just, an ending of some kind is still a need, in my opinion. An epilogue with a (nameless, even, that would be neat) culprit apprehended. A 'X years later'

conclusion. The letter resurfacing after a while. Someone confessing. You know, anything that ties up what feels like a loose end without going into detail.

This section leaves me with a number of impressions:

She seems to believe the characters in the novel are entirely fictional. Thirty seconds of Googling would have shown that they are not, and are based on real men of the Napoleonic Era. Napoleon Bonaparte is not a fictional character. I do not expect everyone to know their historical figures, but context was provided and not engaged with.

The reviewer desires a tidy resolution. Again, a small amount of Googling would have shown that this death remains a cold case after 219 years. Forcing an ending where there is a letter found or a confession made would have been a fabrication of the historical record.

Furthermore, on those two points, if the reviewer did not wish to utilize Google, I also explicitly pointed out in the copyright section that these were historical figures, and also pointed out in the afterword what the fates of those real men were. I also go on to state the mysterious death the book hinges on remains unsolved more than two centuries later. This section the reviewer wrote seems to indicate she did not fully engage with or read the material presented to her.

Additionally, the reviewer asked me to deceive my audience by fabricating a resolution that history does not support. This both historiographical malpractice and a violation of ethical journalism that would and should immediately draw academic and professional condemnation.

Like this, it reads to me as if that there's a bit of action—Villeneuve's death—followed by a lot of talking.

Yes, this is what people did in 1806. They talked. They did not surf the internet. They had a political crisis that could not be resolved with pistols blazing and sabers out. I am not sure what the reviewer was asking for here, and the lack of clarity is not helpful to me or potential readers of my work.

The reviewer's bio indicates she is an editor, but she does not provide specific and actionable advice that one would expect of an editor, even in a review.

I am a former journalist with a university degree and editorial training. I know what a competent review looks like, versus when an article should be sent back to the writer. This reviewer claims to be an editor, but based on the quality of this review, it would not survive a first-round editing pass by

any serious and professional editing standards. This is highly incompetent, and I expected better of Reedsy.

If a reviewer is asking for the fabrication of known historical details, this puts Reedsy's reputation at risk with historians, librarians, and educational institutions who seriously value accuracy and fidelity in documentation -- and is actively dangerous in our current post-truth socio-political climate.

The day after the review, I was emailed a link to provide feedback for the reviewer. Based on this experience, I will not be recommending Reedsy to fellow authors unless the platform takes greater care in vetting that its reviewers demonstrate the necessary professional standards, critical engagement and the intellectual rigor to engage with the material they are given.

While waiting for a response to what is essentially an actual editorial peer review, I did some more digging around on Reedsy.

On [r/selfpublish](#), I saw (unsubstantiated) rumors that Reedsy employees would pose as authors to leave gushing reviews about the service on the subreddit.

More substantial were the complaints of editorial malpractice, where vetted "editors" eviscerated entire manuscripts after being asked not to, or ghosting authors entirely. Some would offer only two pages of changes for a 90k word manuscript after two months of silence.

And then there is this article on Medium (soft paywall): [Reedsy Discovery \(a.k.a. How to Pay \\$50 to Become Their Unpaid Intern\)](#).

Reedsy is free to join, but it costs \$50 to list your book for review. That sounds simple enough — except it's like paying an entry fee to a party where no one shows up, the DJ's asleep, and someone hands you a clipboard and says, "Cool, now *you* go find the guests."

On 8 July, very late into my timezone, I contacted a Reedsy live chat agent, since I still hadn't heard any resolution to my issue despite going through authorized channels.

Reedsy <transcripts@support.reedsy.com> Tuesday, July 8, 2025 at 8:54 PM
To: [REDACTED]

I sent in a request for help a week ago. No one has responded

This is about a review on my book I am disputing as unprofessional. I do not mind bad reviews, but I mind reviews that are careless.

Hello Anatole,
Thanks for reaching out.
Apologies for the delayed response. I'll make sure our Discovery team receives your report and gets back to you.
I've just reached out to them and shared your concerns.

Alex sent this

Reedsy.docx
Download file

I am prepared to go public with this

She has asked me to violate historiographical and journalistic ethics

This is unacceptable

Also, if you feel the review isn't fair, you can file a report by following these steps:

1. Go to [Your submissions](#)
2. Click on the ellipsis icon (...)
3. Select [Report Review](#)

Please note that we can only remove reviews that violate our [Terms of Use](#) and are found to be dishonest, biased, or unfair.

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For more details, feel free to check out our [Submission Guidelines & FAQ](#).

Alex sent this

I did that a week ago, and have not had anyone reach out to me.

I understand your frustration Anatole, I'm following up on this for you.

Alex sent this

Please read the document I have sent you.

You say Reedsy has a policy against biased reviews. I believe the document lays out the case for bias clearly.

I've also shared the document with the Discovery team. They log in later in the day, which means you'll receive a reply tomorrow (July 10th).

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you and thank you for your patience.

Alex sent this

Alright, will a transcript of this chat be sent to me?

Yes, it will.

Alex sent this

As I stated to the chat agent “Alex,” I believe I have laid out a prosecutorial case that Tissie Lilaclicorice demonstrated bias in her review of my work. Alex claimed he forwarded it on to the “Discovery” team, as if they are not

one cohesive platform. I have not found any evidence to suggest they are not a single cohesive platform.

As of this posting, 15 July 2025 UTC, I have not heard back from Reedsy at all. The status of Tissie Liladlicorice's deeply unprofessional review remains on my book at Reedsy Discovery.

My book — *Lies Agreed Upon* — deals with narrative breakdown, historiographical doctoring, and institutional stonewalling. I did not expect to personally become part of an event containing those same themes.

I have archived Tissie's original review and my rebuttal on the Internet Wayback Machine and archive.ph. This page will also be archived on those two sites, and later mirrored on my Substack. Further failure will result in a top level post on r/selfpublish, where I know Reedsy founder, Richard Fayet, has been known to post in response to user questions and grievances.

This essay is under Creative Commons license in the event anyone wants to use this as teaching material for how a review should be conducted.



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durocsdeskdrawer

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ABOUT ME

Anatole Ternaux writes the stories he wants to read — because no one else is as reckless, obsessive, or pissed off enough to write them. He may also be a Napoleonic cryptid.

[More about me here.](#)



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